

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 3, Southall 2

FOR the first time this season, Wycombe Wanderers' forwards found their best form with Dylan Evans (2) and Tony Horseman sharing the goals in Tuesday's exciting Isthmian League Premier Division encounter with Southall at Loakes Park.

But although Wycombe fans must be delighted to see the goals flowing at last after only five in as many games, the Blues had to come from behind yet again and kept their unwelcome record of failing to score first in the league this season.

Nevertheless it must have been warming for manager John Reardon to see his side hit three goals, especially after the team changes he had made. He gambled in giving Steve Vass his first 90 minutes of Isthmian football at left back, switching Bob Davies to right back and moving Paul Birdseye to midfield.

Vass responded magnificently. His confidence in breaking forward to set up and support attacks spread through the team and the frequent applause he drew from the crowd was richly deserved. Although a little weak in the air, his ground work was excellent and it is no surprise he has interested Manchester City this season, training with them for five weeks earlier in the year.

Birdseye did well in a midfield role and had four or five good strikes at goal but Davies struggled in his unaccustomed right back position.

The changes were made because Graham Mackenzie was absent on holiday. John Maskell also returned in goal.

Evans' two goals capped his best performance of the season. Dylan has his critics but few could fault him on his contribution against Southall and his non-stop running was a feature of the victory. The veteran 'Bodger' Horseman snapped up a superb goal to open his account in his 17th season with the club.

GIFT START

Most of the action was reserved for the second half and from Wycombe's point of view, the least said about the first 45 minutes, the better. Another defensive error gave Southall a gift start after five minutes and for the next 40, Wanderers struggled to put their game together.

Poor midfield passing, with Howard Kennedy and John Priestley the main offenders, spoilt many attacks while the Blues back four were often worried by the visitors' nippy and skilful front runners. Up front, Wanderers could manage but a handful of efforts at goal.

Southall struck after only five minutes when first Kennedy and then Davies gave the ball away passing back. Ray Knowles nipped in and slipped an inside pass to Alan Morris, who had time to select his spot before beating the coverless Maskell.

Birdseye replied with Wycombe's first threat after 18 minutes when his shot flew wide and then Mick Holfield side-footed a first time effort just over the top. But these were only glimpses from Wycombe and much of the time they gave the ball away with frustrating regularity.

Southall looked more dangerous up front and Knowles forced a fine save from Maskell after 26 minutes. Errors ruined the flow of play until half time.

EXPLODED

After the break, however, the match exploded into life and produced four goals. The first was Wycombe's equaliser when Vass curled a fine ball down the left flank to Evans. Using his speed, he cut into the box, stumbled but still got in a powerful shot wide of goalkeeper Gordon Linton.

The goal was desperately needed to lift the Blues out of the doldrums and with Vass surging forward whenever possible, they began to play with real confidence. Holfield missed a gaping goal with only Linton to beat but Wanderers made it 2-1 after 63 minutes. Horseman's long range shot looked easy for the 'keeper but it bounced awkwardly and hit his arm as he went down. Evans raced in to knock home the rebound and put Wycombe ahead.

The pressure was now firmly on the Southall defence which was beginning to look slow and tired. Birdseye went close with a looping header and it came as no surprise when Horseman made it 3-1 after 68 minutes with a cracking goal. Holfield created it with a searing burst from midfield. Beating three men he unselfishly fed Horseman who checked inside and thumped a fierce shot into the roof of the net.

But then Wycombe lapsed for a second time and paid the price when Southall replied with an equally good goal. A long ball out of defence put Morris away and with Wanderers running back, he crossed low for Knowles to knock home first time in a glorious flowing move.

Five minutes later Birdseye was most unlucky not to increase the lead when his clever shot beat Linton but hit the crossbar.

Southall, forced to give away many free kicks to halt Wycombe's raids, had Gary Smith booked for a two footed tackle in the 86th minutes but Smith can count himself unlucky as there were worse offenders on the field.

Despite all the Wanderers pressure in the second half, Southall twice went close to snatching a draw in the last five minutes when Maskell had to race out of his area to kick clear. Seconds later a Southall free kick caused all sorts of confusion inside the Wycombe box before a hefty boot relieved the danger.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; R. Davies, K. Maad, A. Phillips, S. Vass, H. Kennedy, P. Birdseye, J. Priestley, M. Holfield; D. Evans, A. Horseman. Sub S. Pratt (not used).

SOUTHALL: G. Linton; G. Towers, G. Smith, N. Laws, C. Hutchings, A. Clarke, H. Manoe, D. Doyle (sub K. Baker 73); G. Hilts, A. Morris, R. Knowles.

Referee: R. Smith (Middle Barton).

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalkeepers:** Wycombe - Evans 2 (60, 88), Horseman (68), Southall - Morris (6), Knowles (68).

Attendance: 700.

Steve Vass stakes his claim

STEVE VASS, the Loughborough College left back, staked such a claim for a regular place in the Wycombe Wanderers side against Southall on Tuesday night, that he is almost certain to be included for tomorrow's (Saturday) Isthmian League game at home to Tooting and Mitcham.

Vass, who trained with Manchester City earlier in the year, made a brilliant debut at left back in the 3-2 victory. Manager John Reardon will be hard pressed to move him although Bob Davies seemed unhappy at right back. Mr Reardon seems likely to give Davies

another 90 minutes in that position, however.

Paul Birdseye's switch to midfield brought more fire power and he was unlucky not to get on the scoresheet against Southall. For tomorrow's match, however, the competition in this department will be tougher as Tooting have made a fine start to the season.

Tuesday night's victory at Kingstonian puts them in second place on equal points with Dagenham, with only one defeat in six games. They lost at Bark- ing 2-0 but have beaten Woking

2-0, Tilbury 2-0 and Hayes 3-2 at home and Slough 3-1 away.

Tooting have been strengthened this season by signing Paul Priddy, the ex-Brentford goalkeeper, Colin Woffenden from Leatherhead and Dave Roberts, who was last year's top goalscorer at Horsham. Most of last season's regulars at Sandy Lane are still there.

Derek Casey, Dave Juneman, Des Dennis and Alan Ives have all scored this season and Tooting's all round strength will test Wanderers' resources to the limit.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (Up to and inc. 8/9/77)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	6	5	0	1	15	9	15
Tooting	6	5	0	1	11	5	15
Enfield	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
Barking	5	4	0	1	10	4	12
Sutton	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Hitchin	5	3	1	1	5	3	10
Wycombe	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Leatherhead	5	2	0	3	6	2	9
Staines	5	2	3	0	7	4	9
King's	5	2	2	1	8	4	8
C'histon	5	2	2	1	8	6	8
Hayes	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
W'mstow	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Tilbury	5	1	2	2	7	9	5
Hendon	5	1	2	3	5	9	5
Lynstone	4	1	2	2	4	4	4
Southall	5	1	1	3	5	6	4
Boreham W	5	1	0	4	5	11	3
Slough	4	0	2	2	2	5	2
Croydon	6	0	1	5	4	11	1
Woking	5	0	1	4	3	11	1
Storrord	5	0	0	5	6	16	0